

A Vision for Hood Canal: Hood Canal Integrated Watershed Plan Summary 20 January 2010

The **Hood Canal Coordinating Council (HCCC)** is developing an integrated watershed plan for Hood Canal. The purpose for the integrated watershed plan is to provide a comprehensive, coordinated strategy for protecting and restoring the Hood Canal watershed. The Hood Canal integrated watershed plan is designed to address the HCCC's strategic objectives as described in the HCCC Strategic Plan and to implement the Puget Sound Partnership's *Puget Sound Action Agenda* for the Hood Canal watershed. The integrated plan is an organizational concept for integrating existing plans and programs, as well as identified gaps, through a strategic planning framework¹ in order to meet the stated goal. The framework will include the following elements:

- A **public involvement strategy** that harnesses the knowledge and potential of the general public to shape and implement the Integrated Watershed Management Plan.
- An **inventory** of existing plans and programs, yielding a shared vision and a priority set of targets to focus conservation and restoration actions.
- A **watershed assessment** that analyzes key ecological attributes of, threats to and viability of priority targets; develops result chains or logic models for priority targets and strategies; develops biological and socioeconomic objectives for those strategies; develops indicators for measuring progress; finalizes the desired future conditions; and develops the adaptive management plan.
- A **management plan** will be compiled from the work described above to operationalize public involvement, corrective actions, decision-making, monitoring, and funding.

The goal of the **Public Involvement Strategy** is to conduct a Hood Canal watershed-wide public outreach effort that will lead to citizen's being engaged and involved in development of the integrated plan and implementation of subsequent actions. It is currently envisioned that the Strategy will involve several phases of communications organized around plan purpose and vision; plan targets, strategies and actions; and implementation. Communications will focus on reaching all levels of the public, including elected officials, organizations, and the general citizenry.

The **inventory** will summarize and assess the current management strategies and ongoing and recently completed restoration and protection projects and programs. The intention is to coordinate planning and implementation for a variety of **existing plans and programs**, not to replace or replicate them. A **vision statement** that describes land, resource, and socioeconomic conditions expected to result from implementing the Integrated Watershed Plan will be developed as part of the inventory. In addition to the vision, there will be a qualitative statement of **desired future conditions**. Combined, the vision statement and desired future conditions will reflect the policies, legal requirements and local needs, given the ecological realities of the Hood Canal watershed. The vision

¹ HCCC intends to utilize portions of the Puget Sound Partnership's approach for using the *Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation* (Conservation Measures Partnership, 2007) in the development of this framework.

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and desired future conditions guide the choice of targets and, in turn, the watershed assessment. Strategies selected and actions taken to implement the plan will be consistent with and designed to achieve the vision. **Targets** will be developed that are the ecological and socioeconomic items of interest that represent and encompass the full suite of diversity identified in the project scope and vision statement. Ecological and socioeconomic targets are the bases for setting goals, carrying out actions, and measuring effectiveness. The inventory will also begin to compare existing activities with the assessment process and outcomes to **identify the gaps** between actions already identified and/or taken and actions that are needed to achieve the vision.

The **watershed assessment** is the element of the strategic planning framework that will provide the policy and technical foundation for the Hood Canal integrated watershed management plan. The HCCC will conduct this assessment utilizing, where appropriate, methodology described in *Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation* (Conservation Measures Partnership, 2007). The assessment will include the following elements:

- A **viability assessment** defines the most important ecological requirements of a healthy target, identifies its current health and acceptable range of variation, guides determination of appropriate and measurable goals for desired future health of priority targets, and sets the foundation for development of a monitoring and adaptive management plan.
- Direct and indirect threats associated with each target will be identified through the development of a **threats assessment** and **situation analysis**. Threats will need to be prioritized as to their relative impact on each target. A situation analysis is a description of the context within which the priority targets function and provides a common understanding of the ecological and socioeconomic systems that affect (positively and negatively) the key targets.
- **Results chains** are developed to describe the key assumptions of how strategies will impact the targets. A results chain is a tool that shows how a particular action will lead to some desired result, explicitly documenting hypotheses and assumptions.
- Once the viability assessment, threat assessment, situation analysis and results chains have been completed the project will be able to return to the preliminary **desired future conditions** and fine-tune them as appropriate.
- An **adaptive management** plan applies the scientific method to the design and implementation of natural resource and environmental policies. Adaptive management emphasizes experimental intervention into an ecosystem to provide insights into how it works and changes.

The **Hood Canal Integrated Watershed Management Plan** will document the materials compiled and developed by the watershed inventory and the watershed assessment into one set of publications that lay the context for ecosystem based management in Hood Canal. Elements of the integrated management plan include:

- A **watershed overview** that will provide the background needed to incorporate historic and current conditions in the Hood Canal watershed, including a general description of environmental and socioeconomic conditions and human-caused and natural disturbances to the ecosystem.

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- An **implementation schedule** that outlines timing and sequencing of priority activities and the most efficient and effective agent for completing them.
- A **prioritization framework** that will describe the priorities developed in the watershed assessment.
- A set of **implementation activities** that are specific actions to achieve the vision and outputs/outcomes outlined in the watershed assessment.
- A section on **governance** that will include recommendations for how the HCCC's members can – to the extent otherwise allowed by law – exercise their primary governmental authorities in a manner consistent with the management plan.
- Identification of **research needs** throughout the watershed that will identify critical uncertainties or gaps in our knowledge and understanding of Hood Canal.
- A **monitoring** program focused on restoration, protection, reduction of pollutants, etc. and built on existing monitoring activities.
- A **public involvement plan** that describes the watershed-wide public outreach effort that will lead to citizen's being engaged and involved in development of the integrated plan and implementation of subsequent actions.
- A set of **funding recommendations**, based on the plan, to state agencies and ultimately to Congress and the State Legislature.
- A **reporting** mechanism for documenting the progress or lack thereof in implementing the watershed management plan, consistent with the state of knowledge and information available at that point in time.